AN ANALYSIS OF THE CAUSES OF LOW SPEAKING PERFORMANCES AMONG ENGLISH STUDENTS

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Abstract

The objectives of this subject are to find out the causes of low speaking performances among English students at fourth semester of English Study Program University of Muhammadiyah Bengkulu. This research used descriptive method. The subjects of the study were 32 students from A, B, and C classes at fourth semester who got low speaking performance. The researcher used speaking test and interview as the instruments of the research in this study. The findings of this research revealed that the causes of students' low speaking performance were; (1) Internal factors (Psychology), such as low self-esteem and confident to speak English, lack of the aspects of language while communicating, including fluency, intonation, vocabulary, pronunciation, and grammar mastery, and (2) External factor, it was bad learning environment such as there are no friends or partner to talk/improve English outside of the class because they always speaks in bahasa or local language. The main cause of low speaking performances among English students at fourth semester of English Study Program University of Muhammadiyah Bengkulu was internal factor. From the interview, there were 31 of 32 students mentioned anxiety and unconfident. The findings of this research revealed that the causes of students' low speaking performance were; (1) low self-esteem and confident to speak English, (2) lack of the aspects of language while communicating, including fluency, intonation, vocabulary, pronunciation, and grammar mastery (3) limited topical knowledge which is as knowledge structures in long-term memory, and (4) bad learning environment.

Keywords: *Causes of Low Speaking Performance, Speaking Performance*

I. Introduction

Speaking is the way to express ideas, thoughts, and feelings orally. It is among the most important skills in English learning. However, other skills, such as listening, reading, and writing need to be taught all together (Oradee, 2012). This is understandable because in fact that in interaction we need to involve more than one skill, ranging from listening to the speaker reacting to what the speaker said and so forth. Even, performance in speaking is a crucial component that needs to pay attention by learners.

Moreover, according to Chaney (1998), speaking is the process of building and sharing meaning through the use of verbal and non-verbal symbols, in a variety of context. Studying English will be better with practicing speaking. Through speaking, one can express their minds, ideas and thought freely and spontaneously. To most people, mastering the art of speaking is the single most important aspect of learning a conversation in the language. Speaking is oral expression that involves not only the use of right patterns of rhythm and intonation but also right order to convey the right meaning (Mackey, 2007). Based on that definition, it means in speaking people must have ability to use the words in the right order with the correct pronunciation, to design the correct grammar for the utterances, and to choose the diction or choice of words.

Furthermore, speaking becomes important because speaking is a skill that can make people easily understand to what things explained. Students' speaking ability is expected to be good because they have learned English since some years before and they will have many performances related to oral skill in universities. But in fact it is difficult for them to fulfill some aspects of speaking performance, namely; accuracy, fluency, pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, and interactive communication, appropriateness, and complexity (Nunan, 2015).

In addition, Hamad (2013) explained that there were some negative factors that affect students' speaking skills. They were in : (a) the use of mother tongue in teaching affect students' proficiency; (b) students afraid to use English in front of public; (c) less the use of English in discussion activities; (d) curriculum less contain exercise of speaking; (e) teachers do not give support and time for students; and (f) speaking section less than listening.

To help the students improve their speaking skills, it is necessary to find ways to help them overcome their problems. The lecturers need to know the factors that affect their students' speaking performance so that they can deal with these factors to help the students improve their speaking performance.

As Tuan and Mai (2015) found that students' speaking performance can be affected by the internal and external factors that come from performance conditions (time pressure, planning, standard of performance and amount of support), affective factors (such as motivation, confidence and anxiety), listening ability and feedback during speaking activities. However, until now, there is no research conducted at this university about these areas. The objectives of this research are: 1) To find out the causes of low speaking performances among English students at fourth semester of English Study Program University of Muhammadiyah Bengkulu in academic year 2018/2019; and 2) To find out the dominant cause of low speaking performances among English students at fourth semester of English Study Program University of Muhammadiyah Bengkulu in academic year 2018/2019.

II. Methodology

This research used descriptive method. Gay (2000: 11) stated that descriptive method is method that involves collecting data in order to answer about the current status of the subject or topic of study. This method was used to find out the causes of low speaking performances among English students at sixth semester of English Study Program University of Muhammadiyah Bengkulu. The subject of the study is the fourth semester students who get low speaking performance at English Study Program of UMB

Bengkulu. The researcher observed each class of the fourth semester so the total subject of this research is 66 students who got speaking test and interview 32 students who got low speaking performance at fourth semester students of English program of UMB Bengkulu.

The researcher used speaking test and interview as the instruments of the research in this study.

III. Results and Discussion

A. Results of Speaking Test

The researcher gave speaking test to the students in class A, B, and C. The result of speaking test is shown in the table below.

Table 1. Speaking Test of Class A

No	Students	Total Score	Mean score	Category
1	A	17	68	Low
2	B	17	68	Low
3	C	17	68	Low
4	D	19	76	Fair
5	E	16	64	Low
6	F	17	68	Low
7	G	16	64	Low
8	H	15	60	Low
9	I	17	68	Low
10	J	15	60	Low
11	K	15	60	Low
12	L	16	64	Low
13	M	17	68	Low
14	N	17	68	Low
15	O	15	60	Low

In class A, there were 15 students who were tested. Based on the result, there were 14 students who got low category in speaking performance, and only 1 student got fair category.

Table 2. Speaking Test of Class B

No	Students	Total Score	Mean score	Category
1	A	20	80	High
2	B	18	72	Fair
3	C	18	72	Fair
4	D	20	80	High

5	E	18	72	Fair
6	F	18	72	Fair
7	G	19	76	Fair
8	H	18	72	Fair
9	I	19	76	Fair
10	J	18	72	Fair
11	K	15	60	Low
12	L	18	72	Fair
13	M	18	72	Fair
14	N	19	76	Fair
15	O	18	72	Fair
16	P	19	76	Fair
17	Q	19	76	Fair
18	R	19	76	Fair
19	S	20	80	High
20	T	18	72	Fair
21	U	18	72	Low
22	V	18	72	Fair
23	W	18	72	Fair
24	X	19	76	Fair
25	Y	15	60	Low
26	Z	18	72	Fair

From 26 students in class B, there were only three students who got low category in speaking, and the rest (23) of them were in fair and high category for the speaking performance.

Table 3. Speaking Test of Class C

No	Students	Total Score	Mean score	Category
1	A	20	80	High
2	B	18	72	Fair
3	C	18	72	Fair
4	D	17	68	Low
5	E	15	60	Low
6	F	16	64	Low
7	G	19	76	Fair
8	H	16	64	Low
9	I	17	68	Low
10	J	16	64	Low
11	K	15	60	Low
12	L	18	72	Fair
13	M	18	72	Fair
14	N	17	68	Low
15	O	18	72	Fair
16	P	17	68	Low
17	Q	19	76	Fair
18	R	17	68	Low
19	S	17	68	Low
20	T	17	68	Low
21	U	17	68	Low
22	V	18	72	Fair
23	W	18	72	Fair
24	X	16	64	Low
25	Y	16	64	Low
26	Z	20	80	High

From 26 students in class C, there were 15 students who had low performance in speaking, and the rest of them were in fair and high category for the speaking performance.

It can be concluded that there were 32 students who got low performance in speaking ability for class A, B, and C. Therefore, the sample of low speaking performance in this research was 32 students.

B. Results of Interview

The interview results are as follows.

1. Do you think that someone get low in speaking performance because she/he has a low self-esteem and confident to speak English? explain!

Based on the interview result, all of the students admitted that they get low in speaking performance because they have low self-esteem and confident to speak English. The self-esteem and confident really influenced the students' speaking performance in front of the class.

As students one and two said that:
"*iya karena kalo kita cemas otomatis konsentrasi kita buyar mau ngomong apa*" (AA)
"*kurang percaya diri sangat mempengaruhi konsentrasi kita dalam menyampaikan sebuah materi, kurangnya materi mampu membuat saya jadi kurang percaya diri*" (SN)

The students get low performance in speaking since they have low self confident while speaking. They were still anxiety while speaking. The self-esteem or self confident

really affected the students' speaking performance.

2. Do you think that someone get low in speaking performance because she/he does not master the aspects of language while communicating, including fluency, intonation, vocabulary, pronunciation, and grammar? explain!

Regarding to the interview result, all of the students admitted that they get low in speaking performance because they did not master in vocabulary, pronunciation, and grammar.

The students said that:

"*vocabulary and pronounciation karena kalau kita sudah tau vocabulary dan proounciation speaking jadi lancar*" (EA)

"*saya kurang mempunyai banyak vocabulary selanjutnya grammar yang buruk juga mempengaruhi speaking*" (PI)

Lack of vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation became the most dominant factors which effected the students' low speaking performance.

3. Do you think that someone get low in speaking performance because she/he has limited topical knowledge which is as knowledge structures in long-term memory? explain!

Based on the interview result, all of the students admitted that they get low in speaking performance because they have limited topical knowledge which is as knowledge structures in long-term memory.

The stduents said that

"*tentu saja pengetahuan tentang topic berpengaruh bang, karena itu sudah pasti membuat kita bingung mau ngomong apa kalo gak tau tentang topik yang dibahas*"(DA)

"*ya pasti pengetahuan tentang topic itu sangat berpengaruh ketika berbicara apalagi kalau*

ada teman-teman yang speakingnya lebih bagus dari pada kita" (CA)

"*sangat mempengaruhi dengan jelas, saya kalo gak tau topik yang dibahas, gak tau juga mau ngomong apa*" (PB)

The interview result showed that the students still got blank mind while speaking in front of the class which means that if they did not master about the knowledge of topic that was presented, they got confuse what they want to speak in front of the class.

4. Do you think that someone get low in speaking performance because of performance conditions which included time pressure, planning, the standard of performance, and the amount of support. explain!

Regarding to the interview result, almost all of the students admitted that the performance conditions which included time pressure, planning, the standard of performance, and the amount of support did not influence their speaking performance. As students said:

"*kalo planning mungkin iya berpengaruh, karena biasanya belum belajar kalo yang lain gak ngaruh deh kayaknya*" (AP)

"*waktu latihan yang diberikan sedikit juga ngaruh kadang kak, jadi buat kita gugup mau ngomong apa*" (ST)

The students got low in speaking performance because of performance conditions which included time pressure, planning, the standard of performance, and the amount of support.

5. Do you think that someone get low in speaking performance because of the learning environment? explain!

Based on the interview result, all of the students admitted that they get low in speaking performance because the learning environment did not support them. As student said that:

"*iya, berpengaruh sekali lingkungan belajar karena kalau kita belajar dengan*

teman-teman yang speakingnya bagus kita juga bisa belajar, kalau sekarang kami susah sih cari lingkungan belajar yang bagus tu" (SK)

"tentu lingkungan belajar mempengaruhi kemampuan speaking kita bang" (KH)

6. **In your opinion, which one is the most dominant factor affects the students' low speaking performance, internal or external?**

"yang paling ngaruh pastinya internal bang, karena itu kan dari dalam diri siswanya masing-masing, kalo eksternal tu dak terlalu ngaruh sih" (Student 1)

"kayakanya internal soalnya itu berkaitan sama percaya diri, motivasi, pemahaman materi pokoknya dari diri sendiri" (student 2)

"internal factor yang mempengaruhi paling besar, kalo dak paham, dak bisa speaking"(student 3)

"yang dari dalam diri kita bang, kita kalo gak paham gak bisa speaking bang" (student 4)

"yang sangat mempengaruhi speaking tu diri sendiri bang bukan orang lain atau lainnya" (Student 5)

Based on the interview result, all of the students admitted that the most dominant factor affects the students' low speaking performance was internal factor which included self esteem, motivation, topical knowledge, and language use mastery.

To sum up, the result of this research revealed that the causes of students' low speaking performance were; (1) low self-esteem and confident to speak English, (2) lack of the aspects of language while communicating, including fluency, intonation, vocabulary, pronunciation, and grammar mastery (3) limited topical knowledge which is as knowledge structures in long-term memory, and

(4) bad learning environment. Moreover, the most dominant factor affects the students' low speaking performance was internal factor.

Discussion

The aimed of this research was to find out the causes of students' low performance. The findings of this research revealed that the causes of students' low speaking performance were; (1) low self-esteem and confident to speak English, (2) lack of the aspects of language while communicating, including fluency, intonation, vocabulary, pronunciation, and grammar mastery (3) limited topical knowledge which is as knowledge structures in long-term memory, and (4) bad learning environment. Moreover, the most dominant factor affects the students' low speaking performance was internal factor.

This research finding confirmed theory from some experts. Low self-esteem and confident to speak English becomes the cause of students' sepaking performance. Psychological factors such as anxiety or shyness, lack of confidence, lack of motivation, and fear of mistakes are the factors commonly that hinder students from speaking. Furthermore, Brown claimed that no successful cognitive or affective activity can be carried out without some degree of self-esteem, self-confidence, knowledge of yourself, and belief in your own capabilities for that activity (Brown, 2001). Self-esteem represents the degree of one's confidence and belief in himself or herself. From the interview result, the researcher found that that learners with high self-esteem manifest more confidence and give more positive evaluations on themselves which will promote their language learning. Some students fail in oral English learning or feel less willing and confident in speaking English in class because they have a low self-esteem.

Moreover, another causes were lack of the aspects of language while communicating, including fluency, intonation, vocabulary, pronunciation, and grammar mastery. According to Chomsky (1965), competence is the ideal language system that enables speakers to produce and understand an infinite number" of sentences in their language, and to distinguish grammatical sentences and ungrammatical

ones. It is used to describe both the production as well as comprehension of the language. In this study, language factor in speaking performance refer to ability of speaker to master the aspects of language while communicating. These aspects included: fluency, intonation, vocabulary, pronunciation, and grammar.

Furthermore, this research also found that topical knowledge as the causes of error. Topical knowledge is defined as knowledge structures in long-term memory (Bachman & Palmer, 1996 as cited in Tuan & Mai, 2015). In other words, topical knowledge is the speakers' knowledge of relevant topical information. The information that topical knowledge provides enables learners to use language with reference to the world in which they live. Bachman & Palmer (1996) state certain test tasks may be easier for those who possess the relevant topical knowledge and more difficult for those who do not. They believe that topical knowledge has effects on speaking performance. Huang (2015) conducted a research to explore the relationships among topical knowledge, anxiety, and integrated speaking test performance. One of his finding shown that topical knowledge strongly influenced integrated speaking performance though in an opposite manner.

English is a language used in communications, so a good language environment can effectively promote learning. But for most of the Indonesian students, English is a foreign language they learn at school, and mostly, students communicate in their everyday life in their native language and too lazy to practice their English outside the class or teaching learning process.

IV. Conclusions and Suggestions

Conclusions

Based on the findings, there were two conclusions of this research:

1 The findings of this research revealed that the causes of students' low speaking performance were; (1) low self-esteem and confident to speak English, (2) lack of the aspects of language while communicating, including fluency, intonation, vocabulary, pronunciation, and grammar mastery (3) limited topical knowledge which is as knowledge structures in long-term memory, and (4) bad learning environment.

2 The main cause of low speaking performances among English students at fourth semester of English Study Program University of Muhammadiyah Bengkulu was internal factor.

Suggestions

Based on the result of this research, the researcher suggests for English students, by knowing the causes of low performance in speaking, the students can find some ways to deal with the causes; For lecturers, the speaking lecturers can make this research as reference to know the causes of students' speaking performance so that the students can give some strategies or ways to overcome the causes in order to help the students improve their speaking performance; and for further research, they can develop another research related to the causes of students' low speaking performance.

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